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ABSTRACT

Seven models of elementary, secondary, and college level programs which use students as aides to counselors and teachers are presented. The programs selected emphasize the effectiveness of student-to-student programs which focus upon academic, social, or personal adjustment problems under the supervision of a trained adult. Action possibilities and suggestions for program implementation are included with the models. (Author)

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PERSONNEL SERVICES
REVIEW

SERIES 3

Human Resources in The Guidance Programs

STUDENTS IN HELPING ROLES

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PERSONNEL SERVICES REVIEW

Series 3
"Human Resources in the Guidance Programs"

Students in Helping Roles

Nancy E. Sloan

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FORWARD

The Personnel Services Review is an ongoing publication Series which has been developed by CAPS to inform personnel workers about new developments in a number of personnel services areas. There will be several different series of the Personnel Services Review. Each series will focus on a broad area of personnel work practice. Within each series there will be a number of specific issues (varying from five to ten depending on the series). Each of these issues will concentrate on a specific practice, procedure or method. The goal of these publications is to enable the reader to: (1) become aware of a practice, procedure or method; (2) learn about the ways in which this practice has been applied by others; (3) understand the underlying theory behind the practice; (4) consider possible applications of the practice in a variety of settings; and (5) consider ways that the practice might be implemented in his own personnel work program.

This particular Personnel Service Review Series is entitled "Human Resources in the Guidance Program." The series will contain about five issues. Each issue will focus on people who are available to participate with the counselor in the school guidance program. Program models for involving families, students, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other community members in guidance and counseling activities will be considered. The series is intended to suggest ways that counselors and student personnel workers on the elementary, secondary, and/or college level may expand their activities and develop new programs through communicating, and actively working with other significant people.

STUDENTS IN HELPING ROLES

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THESE CONCERNS?

Do counselors need additional resources to aid with daily guidance activities?

Could other students form effective relationships with those students who are difficult to reach through the usual counseling procedures -- such as underachievers, potential dropouts, or withdrawn young people?

If peer influence is a major control upon the adolescent's behavior, how can this be used effectively by counselors and teachers?

Can a student benefit by personally taking the role of the counselor or teacher? How can a helping relationship be mutually beneficial?

Can one child, possibly older, communicate more effectively with another child without the problems of authority arising as they might with an adult?

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE?

Students are an available resource for the counselor to place in helping roles. The academically talented, the peer leader, the underachiever, and the interested volunteer can be given orientation and training to act as an aide to counselors and teachers. Student-to-student programs may focus upon academic, social, or personal adjustment problems in small group or individual relationships under the supervision of a trained adult.

MODELS OF PRACTICE

Elementary School Level

Elementary school children from fourth, fifth, and sixth grade who were ego-damaged and needed to improve their peer relationships and self-concepts were matched with volunteer high school students in one program. The high school students had indicated an interest in working in the fields of social work, teaching, or mental health and were chosen for their maturity. The teenagers and children were matched in pairs of like sex with as homogeneous backgrounds as possible. They met in pairs or small groups weekly for 45 minutes to talk, play games, or study. The older students also held bi-monthly group meetings with the supervising counselor to discuss questions and their feelings about how the program was going. Programs for the entire group such as a picnic, volleyball game, and visit to the high school were held. Evaluation showed that the children improved in attitudes toward their peer group and also moved toward personal self-acceptance

and increased confidence. The participating high school students felt that they gained in knowledge and understanding of others through the project. (Winters & Arent,1969)

In an on-going four year project, 40 college student volunteers were assigned to first and third grade students. The elementary school children were selected as underachievers who might develop emotional problems, but did not as yet show symptoms calling for referral. The goal of the program was prevention by giving such children the opportunity for "big brother" and "big sister" relationships. The college students met weekly with their assigned child throughout the year. Activities included games, sporting events, craft projects, and visits to museums and laboratories. Evaluation of the program at the end of one year showed favorable reactions by parents and teachers to the students progress, but test data were too tentative for definite conclusions. (Thomson, 1968)

As part of the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) in-school program, 14-and 15-year-old dropouts were paid to tutor younger underachievers. The program, "Youth Tutoring Youth," assigned disadvantaged underachievers to elementary school youngsters for regular tutoring in reading. The tutors were given a short, intensive training program in particular methods of reading instruction and then began working with the younger children after school on a paid basis. In some cases, older NYC enrollees served as paraprofessional supervisors of the program. Evaluation indicated that both tutor and tutee gained in literary skills, work responsibility, and motivation toward school. Improved attitudes towards school and sympathy with the classroom teachers were especially noted in the teenagers after the tutoring experience. (Kohlet, 1969 and Youth Tutoring Youth, 1968)

Secondary School Level

A combination of professional individual counseling and amateur tutoring was used in a program to help seventh grade underachievers. Selected seventh graders received one-and-one-half hours of individual counseling every other week for ten weeks. The tutors were academically gifted, socially introverted ninth graders. The tutors matched themselves to the tutees on the basis of information supplied about general personality characteristics and academic problems. During the ten weeks, the tutors met together five times to discuss their progress. The counselor attempted to give them help and suggestions for establishing better one-to-one relationships during these meetings. An attitude rating scale administered before and after the ten week period and grade point averages were used to measure change in the seventh graders. Both measures indicated a significant increase in the group of underachievers. Subjective evaluation with the tutors supported the generalization that a good interpersonal relationship leads to mutual benefits and satisfaction. (Wittmer, 1969)

A program of peer leadership in counseling and study groups was developed by Thelma Vriend in an inner-city high school. Eleventh grade students were ranked as high-performing and low-performing on the basis of teacher recommendations, grade point averages, and standardized test scores. Students classified as high-performing were trained as peer leaders and placed in counseling and study groups with low-performing students. Counseling groups of three peer leaders and nine other students each met weekly with the counselor for a 40-minute session. The counseling group was divided into three study groups. Each study group contained a peer leader and three low-performing students. These groups met weekly in 40-minute periods to implement activities planned in the group counseling sessions. Guidance activities for the two counseling groups combined (24 students) were held once a week to provide information on the world of work, vocational planning, and self-evaluation. Evaluation for the program showed that the low-performing students who participated developed better classroom skills, higher grades, and higher levels of vocational and educational aspirations and expectations. (Vriend, 1969).

College Level

At Southwest Texas State College, upperclass students serve as counselors for freshmen. The student counselors are carefully selected and given 40 hours of intensive training. They then handle the personal-social orientation and academic adjustment activities of the freshmen guidance program. The activities include orientation meetings, test interpretation and study skills guidance, all done in small group sessions. Evaluation of the program indicates that participating freshmen improved in study behavior and grade point average and that they were more willing to accept peer guidance because they perceived the upperclass students as giving more realistic advice. (Brown, 1965)

Recognizing the importance of residence halls staff to the educational and developmental needs of students, the University of North Dakota instituted a training program for

resident advisors. A sub-professional counselor role with certain functions was determined. These functions included sensitivity to students with minor problems, recognition of serious problems needing referral, and provision of an atmosphere for better group relations in the dormitory. Twenty training sessions of 1 1/2 to 2 hours each emphasized increased self-knowledge, and understanding of individual development, understanding of the symptoms of serious problems, and the development of attitudes and techniques for effective counseling. These were held throughout the school year for the residence halls staff. The training program as developed proved feasible and did result in a more effective residence hall staff. (Jackson, 1966)

GENERALIZATIONS

1. Students can be given short-term training which will increase their sensitivity to others.

2. Peer influence is very high during the adolescent years. Peer models may communicate more effectively than an adult with students.

3. Particular students, such as the underachiever, the disadvantaged, and potential dropout, may establish more effective relationships with a peer who does not represent authority and its inherent threats.

4. Students who are prepared to serve as "counselor assistants" or subprofessionals are more readily available to the student with minor day-to-day problems.

5. Students perceive peers as speaking the same language and giving more realistic appraisals and guidance in many situations.

6. A peer counseling program may be benificial to students selected as both counselors and counselees. Selection of students who need recognition, responsibility, or increased social confidence to act as peer counselors has been mutually successful.

7. Student-to-student programs require professional supervision, but they extend the counselor's resources and activities much beyond the time involved in supervision.

8. Students trained as participants in such a program may be more aware of other students in difficulty. This awareness can serve as a link between the professional counselor and students in serious need of help who may not have sought out the counselor before.

9. Students may be especially effective in working with students who seek acceptance and confidence in their peer group.

10. More intensive group counseling programs are possible with the inclusion of peer leaders.

11. Students can be used in such aspects of the guidance program as orientation, study skills, or planning which draw professional counselor time away from individual counseling.

ACTION POSSIBILITIES

Students could be included in planning the emphasis of the guidance program and in analyzing the counseling needs of students.

A small group counseling program could use students as peer group leaders. This might help the group focus upon social concerns of members.

The homeroom guidance program might be more effective if small groups with student leaders focus on the topics selected for the year's program.

A tutoring program with peers or younger students might be initiated with emphasis on the one-to-one relationship as well as emphasis on improving subject skills.

A "big brother and sister" program for younger children in need of attention and social support could place students in a working relationship with elementary teachers as well as the guidance counselor.

A program with counseling benefits at three levels is possible. An older student may serve as a paraprofessional supervisor to a group of "counselor assistants" working with peers or younger children.

Socially introverted or underachieving students may be trained as counselor assistants or tutors to give them confidence and responsibility in working with others.

A number of short-term training programs for students are suggested in the models. Such training programs may become student-directed as peer leaders with experience in a student-to-student program train others to participate.

A student-to-student program might emphasize prevention by reaching those who have a possibility of developing emotional or academic problems.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Goals -- A student-to-student program may be instituted to broaden the contacts of the guidance department, to give academic help to underachievers, to orient new students to the school, to give additional responsibilities to particular students, or to focus upon social concerns in small groups.

2. Program Design -- The objectives of the program may designate whether small groups or one-to-one relationships will be established. Duration of the program, whether short-term or ongoing, may also depend upon program focus. Possible meeting times are after school, homeroom, activity hours, study halls, or scheduled residence hall hours.

3. Participants -- Student counselors or student tutors may be selected from the academically gifted, peer group leaders, student volunteers, socially introverted students, or those students who express an interest in the helping professions. The students chosen to be helped by the program might be potential social or emotional problems, or those who seek academic and social advice.

4. Program Initiation -- Complete orientation of administrators and teachers is necessary so understanding of the program is achieved. The program models suggest that teachers and parents especially may be suspicious of a student led program unless they understand the objectives. The amount of orientation and training given to student counselors depends upon the scope of the program. Training emphasis or methods suggested by the models are varied. An introduction to certain teaching methods, techniques of establishing relationships, counseling role and function, or ways of being sensitive to self and others might be the focus of a short training program.

5. Supervision -- A student-to-student program may be supervised and coordinated by the counselor with help from teachers and older students. The NYC program described the use of older students as paraprofessional supervisors. Regularly scheduled small group meetings offer student counselors an opportunity to share their experiences and receive help on any problems they may encounter. The professional counselor may also carry on supportive activities such as individual counseling for program participants.

6. Evaluation -- Depending upon the goals of the program, criteria for evaluation might be change in either the student counselors or counselees, an increase in communication between the student body and the counseling department, or indications of prevention of potential student problems whether academic, social, or emotional.

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